THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The matter is under consideration of the Government.

Import of Consumer Products

313. SHRI SHIV PRATAP MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to import consumer products like face cream, toothpaste etc; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KAMALAUDDIN AHMED): (a) The Government have no proposal at present to import consumer products like face cream, tooth paste etc.

(b) Does not arise

Changes Sought in Export Policy of Books

314. SHRI SHIV PRATAP MISHRA:
SHRI P. UPENDRA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that book publishers and distributors have sought changes in the export policy and grant of soft loans to give a "much needed" fillip to the export of books; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard and the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) No specific proposal has been received from book publishers and distributors seeking change in the export policy and grant of soft loans.

Under the Export—Import Policy 1992—97, exports of books and publications are allowed freely. Marketing Development Assistance (MDA) is granted to the Chemicals and Allied Products Export Promotion Council, Calcutta, annually which helps to boost the export of books and publications. No special dispensation is granted to any industry in this regard.

Export of Coal

315. SHRI SHIV PRATAP MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to export coal in the coming years; and

(b) if so, the details thereof; and what is the present production of coal in the country?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Export of coal is permitted without any restriction under the current EXIM policy. The level of production was around 238.23 million tonnes in 1992-93.

Implications of Nafta on India's External Trade

316. SHRIMATI ILA PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what would be the implications of the formation of North Atlantic Free Trade Association (NAFTA) on India's external trade;

(b) whether it is a fact that suggestions were made by two US-based Indian Economists that India should join NAFTA;

(c) if so, details thereof and

(d) what is the status of India's declared stand on free trade within SAARC countries?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to to (d) The North American Free Trade

Agreement (NAFTA) envisages the establishment of free trade area in 10—15 years. Our major market in North America is the United States. As Canada and Mexico do not directly compete with our major exports to the US, it is not anticipated that there will be any immediate adverse implications for India's exports.

India prefers the multilateral approach to the regional approach in international trade. Therefore, our efforts have been to strengthen multilateralism during the Uruguay Round.

However, India cooperates with other developing countries in preferential trading arrangements. These include the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA). Currently negotiations are going on amongst member states to determine the product coverage.

Potential for Agro Exports

317. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) what is the potential for agro-exports during remaining period of Eighth Five Year Plan ;

(b) what are the hurdles in exploiting the potential with details thereof ; and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government to overcome the hurdles ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) The export projections for agro-exports at the end of the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992—97) including tea, coffee, rubber and cotton is Rs. 12,064 crores at 1991-92 prices.

(b) and (c) The international market for basic agricultural foodstuffs viz. cereals, dairy products, meat and sugar is constrained by not only high barriers in the principal markets but also by the massive export subsidies granted by US, EEC, etc.

At present, an intense struggle is on between the important trading nations to bring about a major improvement in market access and market distortive measures.

Lack of infrastructural facilities (like air cargo facilities not keeping pace, inadequate shipping facilities), high air freight rates and lack of vapour treatment facilities are the major hurdles in fully exploiting the potential for exports of agricultural commodities. A programme has been drawn up for up-grading the infrastructural facilities during the Eighth Plan period, to be implemented, by the Ministry of Agriculture. On the export of fresh fruits and vegetables, air freight subsidy will be made available on a selective basis.

Commercial Outfits in Indian Missions Abroad

318. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to expand the scope and role of commercial outfits in various Indian Missions abroad ;

(b) if so, in what manner with details thereof ;

(c) whether Government are considering to make the commercial outfits to be more responsible and accountable for achieving the trade target fixed by the Ministry ; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) to (d) The Manual of Instructions to Commercial Representatives Abroad is currently under revision which *inter-alia* seeks to effectively re-define the role of Commercial Representatives enabling them to respond to the needs of Indian industry and business in the context of the economic liberalisation undertaken.